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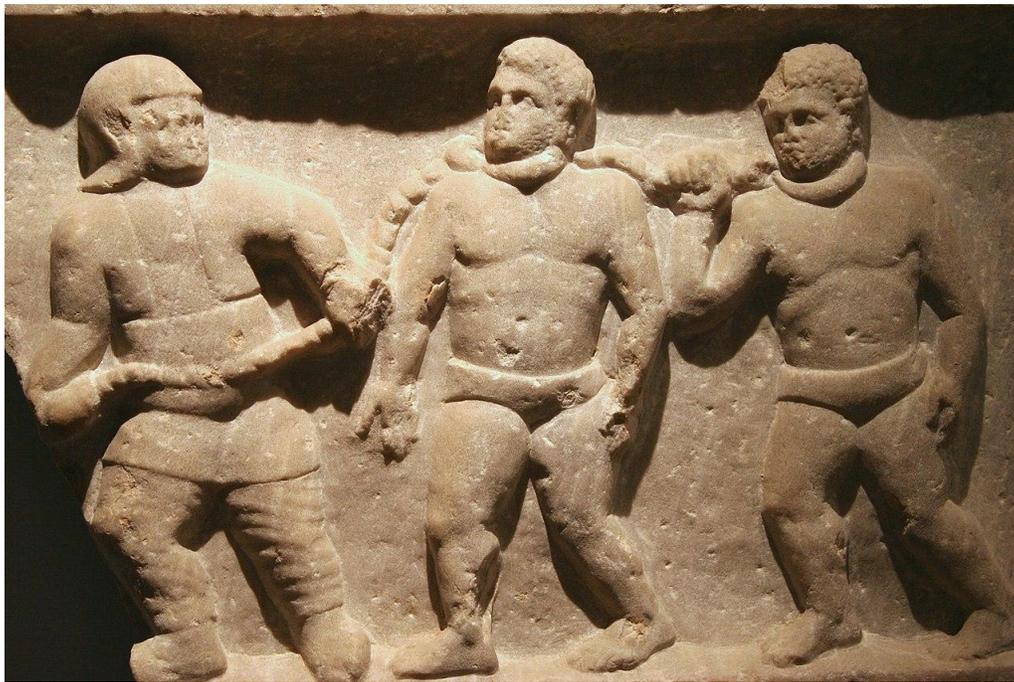
Summer 2022 Texts-in-Translation Reading Group

<u>Hidden in Plain Sight: What Do We Know About the Life of an Enslaved Roman?</u>

The Roman Empire was the wealthiest, most influential power in the ancient Mediterranean for centuries. We know this thanks to an abundance of literary sources that detail the exploits of many high-ranking, illustrious Roman men who held the reigns of power during that time.

But what of those lower down the social scale? For every emperor, senator or general, there were many more enslaved individuals, who made that power possible. Yet there is not one single ancient source dedicated to detailing the lives of the enslaved in Roman society.

Consequently, historians must cast a wide net for scraps of information to uncover the experience of Roman slavery. By reading literary excerpts that range from agricultural manuals and historical texts, to private letters, philosophical teachings and even comic drama, this course gathers those scraps together to take you on a literary journey through the life of an enslaved individual.

Your SASA Educational Ambassador:
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Dates (3 weeks):
Mondays at 1 pm EST
-Session 1: June 13th
-Session 2: June 20th
-Session 3: June 27th

Zoom Meeting Link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87593589673?pwd=dlAxTXRKb2svQ01waFVnalNQSDNWdz09

Zoom Meeting ID: 875 9358 9673

Zoom Meeting Password: 317317

<u>Reading Group Google Folder: (PDF Readings and Session Recordings)</u>
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AAueNA8aOcwXbAn8PIEB9O0JgqHD_iYF?usp=sharing

Below, you will find links to the required reading for each of the sessions. Each week has a link to a folder where you will find handouts with a collection of primary sources reprinted for you to read. Due to the nature of the evidence, these are often groups of shorter excerpts rather than longer, full-blown texts; our challenge is to collect these together to form a cohesive and accurate picture of slavery in the Roman world.

Please be aware that slavery is an abusive, dehumanising and violent institution, thus an analysis of the evidence for that will necessarily involve discussions of subjects that some people might find upsetting.

Taking a critical approach to the ancient sources is an essential skill that we will develop over the course of these sessions. Therefore, I recommend that you take the time to research some basic information about the authors, when they were writing, and what the literary genre is. You do not need to go into any great depth of analysis in this regard (seriously - just a quick check on Wikipedia is fine!), but it is always useful to have a wider contextual understanding of your sources while you read them.

Most of the translated sources are taken from the Loeb Classical Library and there are links to the specific translation for each literary excerpt. Unfortunately, the Loeb library requires an

institutional log-in to access the full texts, but don't worry - **you do not need to access those** as the handouts are all that's needed for each session.

However, if you would like to read more broadly on the authors/texts that we are looking at and you cannot access Loeb, you can find *some* English translations under the 'Source Texts' subheading at LacusCurtius • A Gateway to Ancient Rome (uchicago.edu).
Further, the Perseus digital library has a good range of English translations that are open access: Perseus Digital Library (tufts.edu). Just enter the name of the ancient author into the search bar at the top right and search for the source you need. Note that, although Perseus is a very useful resource, some of the translations are rather dated in their vocabulary. This is not a problem for your general appreciation of the texts, but it *is* why I have not chosen to use those as the sources on the main handouts.

Finally, there is a select bibliography of secondary literature at the end of the syllabus. These publications are most relevant to the main topics that we will be reading about each week, but are there only as a supplementary resource and should not be seen as required reading.

If you have any difficulties accessing the reading, or any other question relating to the course then please don't hesitate to get in touch (my email address is listed above).

Week 1: The slave as 'person'
Objective accounts of the enslavement process and Roman attitudes towards slavery.

This week will give you a general overview of Roman slavery and introduce you to some of the methodological challenges that historians face when trying to uncover the evidence for that.

All the relevant reading materials can be found in the following folder: Hidden in plain sight_week 1
There are two handouts with literary excerpts from the ancient sources for you to read. Each excerpt has a link to the full publication online, should you wish to read outside the excerpts for context (however that is not a requirement for our session).
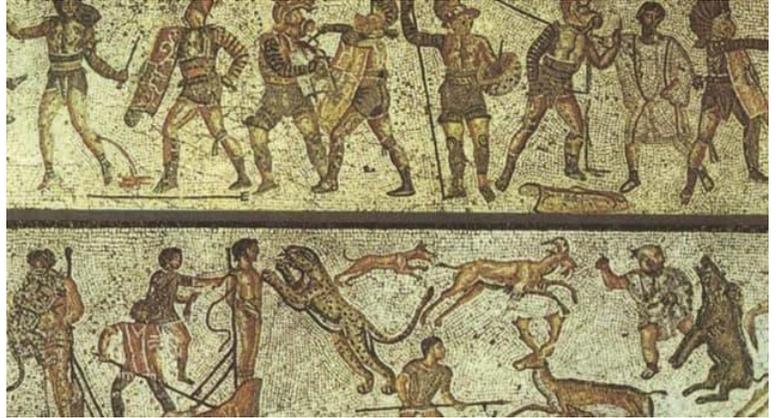
When you approach these handouts, consider the following questions:
1. How can we use a variety of different sources to construct an image of slavery from a *first hand* perpsective?
2. Which sources are more useful or reliable than others and why?
3. What challenges must we overcome in the process and what analytical techniques can we use to help us achieve a better understanding?

- Handout 1 brings together a number of literary sources that detail the various conditions and experiences of slavery.
- Handout 2 considers a range of sources that detail the perspectives of Roman enslavers.

If (and only if!) you would like to do some secondary reading, chapters 12 and 13 of Bradley, K. & Cartledge, P. (eds.) (2011) *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, Cambridge, offer a good overview of the subject in both the Republic and Imperial periods.

Week 2:The slave as 'threat'
Fear of slaves, fear of rebellion.

This week, we we take a look at some alternative views from Roman enslavers that reveal a different side to the master/slave relationship. Then we will read some lengthier excerpts from historical and biographical literature that detail three slave revolts that shook the Roman Republic during the 2nd century BCE.

All the relevant reading materials can be found in the following folder: Hidden in plain sight_week 2

- Handout 1 contains a number of smaller sources that detail Roman enslavers' mistrust of their slaves and how that occasionally developed into genuine fear.
  When you read these, think back to what we learned about Roman enslaver attitudes in week 1 and consider the following questions:
    1. How do these texts compare to the ones you have already read?
    2. Does this give you a different view of slavery, and slaves as individuals?

- Handout 2 is a slightly weightier set of texts.
  The first two excerpts are different accounts of a slave revolt that took place in southern Itay, led by the ex-gladiator Spartacus. Read these two accounts and consider the following:
    1. How reliable are they both; do they agree with each other (and if not, why not)?
    2. What can we learn about the life of a slave in the Roman Republic through reading these texts, and what can we learn about the individuals and their personal motivations?

  The second two excerpts were written by the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus. These passages are his account of the 1st and 2nd Sicilian slave revolts (sometimes referred to as 'The Servile Wars'). The first excerpt (of the first revolt) is less complete than the second excerpt (of the second revolt).
  When you read these, consider what conditions led to the slaves revolting in the first place.
    1. Did the slaves behave as you would have expected?
    2. Does Diodorus condemn, or condone the behaviour of the slaves and why?

  Chapters 5 & 8 from Urbainczyk, T. (2008) *Slave Revolts in Antiquity,* California (in the select bibliography) will help as secondary reading for this week, should you wish to do so.

Week 3: The slave as 'image'
Fictional representations of slavery.

In this final week, we will read a comic drama by
the Roman playwright Plautus. Its Latin title is
Mostellaria, which is translated here as 'The Ghost'
(you will sometimes see it translated as 'The
Haunted House' as well).

Plautine drama relies heavily on 'stock' characters
(the 'clever slave', the 'old man' etc.) that would
have been easily recognisable to an ancient
audience (similar to more modern pantomime).
Slaves feature heavily in these comedies, so they
are a useful resource for the historian of Roman
slavery.

However, these are works of dramatic fiction and the limitations of that genre must be kept in
mind as you read this play.

All the relevant reading materials can be found in the following folder: Hidden in plain sight_week 3

-   Handout 1 will give you some useful background information on what we know about
    Plautus as an individual and as a source.

-   Then read 'The Ghost' from *The Rope and Other Plays*.

Naturally, not all of the characters in this play are slaves, but reading the entire play will give
you a good understanding of the context and world within which the slave characters behave.
As you read, you will need to pay close attention to the various characters that interact onstage
and consider how the relationships between those characters change. Think about the following
questions as you read:

1. How realistic is the behaviour of the enslaved characters?
2. How would a Roman audience have reacted when seeing those characters onstage?
3. What, if anything, can we infer about Roman slavery in real life by reading these plays -
    can you relate any of the dialogue to elements of Roman slavery that we have
    encountered elsewhere on this course?

Try to identify one or two passages from the play that you think are particularly useful for
revealing aspects about the life of a slave in ancient Rome.

I have uploaded a copy of Petronius' *Satyricon* - a satyrical novella that details the comically debauched travels and exploits of the main protagonist Encolpius and his companion (possibly enslaved) Giton.
If you have time, I recommend reading the chapter entitled 'Dinner at Trimalchio's', which gives a fictional account of the *nouveau-riche* freedman Trimalchio, in all his uncouth glory.
When you are reading this, think back to what we discussed about Vedius Pollio in week one, why Trimalchio is depicted in the way that he is, and consider how he treats his own slaves despite being an ex-slave himself.

Finally, I have also uploaded: Deborah Kamen, C.W. Marshall (eds.) *Slavery and sexuality in classical antiquity.* Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2021.

The chapter by Kathy L Gaca relates to our discussion on the sexual violence that women suffered during the slave revolts in Sicily and Volsinii, but there is also an excellent essay by Ulrike Roth that offers an alternative view of Trimalchio.

As always, the focus of this week is to make a close reading of the primary source itself. However, if you have time and would like to read some more scholarship on Plautus, then I recommend first reading the introduction (pp1-20) to Stewart, R. (2012) *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, Chichester, which will give you an excellent grounding in the relations between Plautine comedy and wider Roman society.
I would also recommend reading chapter 6 of Richlin, A. (2017) *Slave Theatre in the Roman Republic: Plautus and Popular Comedy*, Cambridge.

Select bibliography of secondary sources:

Bradley, K. (1989) *Slavery and Rebellion in the Roman World, 140 B.C. – 70 B.C.*, London.

Bradley, K. & Cartledge, P. (eds.) (2011) *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, Cambridge.

Brown, P. (2020) 'Were there Slaves in the Audience of Plautus' Comedies?', *CQ* 69(2): 654-671.

Fitzgerald, W. (2000) *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination,* Cambridge.

Gamauf, R. (2004) '*Cum Aliter Nulla Domus Tuta Esse Possit...:* Fear of Slaves and Roman Law', *Actes des Colloques du groupe de Recherche sur l'Esclavage dans L'Antiquité* 29: 145-164*.*

George, M. (2002) *'*Slave Disguise in Ancient Rome*', Slavery and Abolition* 23(2): 41-54.

Joshel, S. & Murnaghan, S (eds.) (1998) *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations.* London.

Joshel, S. R. (2010) *Slavery in the Roman World.* New York.

Noronha, R. (2019) 'The Myth of Spartacus and the Tradition of the Oppressed', *Theory and Event* 22(4): 1082-1104.

Patterson, O. (1984) *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study.* Cambridge Mass. & London.

Richlin, A. (2017) *Slave Theatre in the Roman Republic: Plautus and Popular Comedy*, Cambridge.

Stewart, R. (2012) *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, Chichester.

Urbainczyk, T. (2008) *Slave Revolts in Antiquity,* California.